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Annual Review 2006-07

Left to right: Bill Coderre, NSERC; Pam Giberson, NSERC-Pacific; Suzanne Fortier, NSERC; Rick Warner and Megan Griffith, NSERC-Pacific.

INTRODUCTION

Rick Warner, Manager

With the establishment of NSERC-Pacific this past year, NSERC now has a coast-to-coast presence with three regional offices.

After I joined NSERC as Manager of NSERC-Pacific in May, I was very fortunate to lead the recruitment of Pam Giberson, Research Development and Promotion Officer, and Megan Griffith, Administrative Officer, who both joined NSERC in October 2006.

Concurrently, a very strong advisory body comprised of representatives from postsecondary institutions, the federal and provincial governments, as well as industry associations, was created. With staff and volunteers in place, NSERC-Pacific is positioned to fulfill the primary objectives identified in the consultation process that lead to the establishment of NSERC regional offices across the country:

Presence – Listen to the needs of clients and partners thereby enhancing communications between the region and national headquarters, and participate in the identification and development of new opportunities.

Participation – Identify how NSERC can help to support research, innovation and advanced training, and to facilitate collaborations.

Promotion – Showcase science and engineering, celebrate research and innovation Successes, and promote science and math education.

The Pacific Region's science and technology community is diverse and vibrant and presents many opportunities for NSERC-Pacific to achieve its objectives. Through collaborations and partnerships we are able to make a significant impact with limited local resources. Of course, as NSERC's representatives in the Pacific region, we are able to draw upon the myriad expertise and resources available from NSERC's head office in Ottawa.

This review highlights some of the activities and accomplishments of NSERC-Pacific during 2006-07, its inaugural year.

PRESENCE

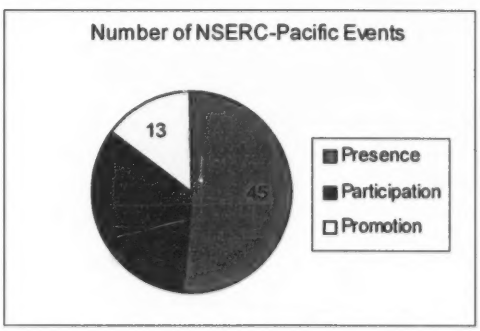
In establishing an office in Vancouver, NSERC-Pacific followed the successful launches of NSERC-Atlantic (Moncton) and NSERC-Prairies (Winnipeg) in 2004 and 2005, respectively. In May 2006, Rick Warner assumed his duties as Manager of NSERC-Pacific in Vancouver. In October, Pam Giberson joined as the Research Development and Promotion Officer and Megan Griffith as the Administrative Officer. NSERC-Pacific will be a resource for the business and academic communities in British Columbia and the Yukon Territory.

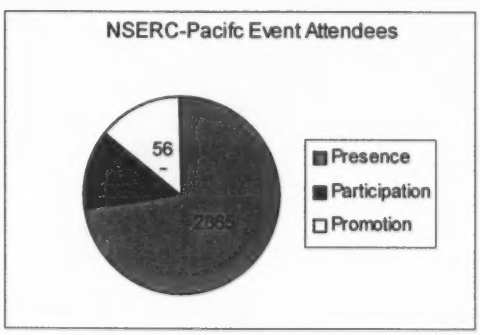
NSERC's role is to make investments in people, discovery and innovation for the benefit of all Canadians. NSERC invests in people by supporting some 23,000 university students and postdoctoral fellows in their advanced studies. It promotes discovery by funding more than 11,000 university professors every year. And it helps make innovation happen by encouraging more than 1,300 Canadian companies to invest in university Research and training. Over the last 10 years, NSERC has invested $6 billion in basic research, university-industry projects, and the training of Canada's next generation of scientists and engineers.

The first objective of the NSERC-Pacific team was to create an increased presence for NSERC in British Columbia and the Yukon Territory. In doing so, the office acts as NSERC's consulate in the region. A two-way flow of information ensures that NSERC in Ottawa is apprised of science and technology developments and issues in the region. Being so informed, NSERC is better able to take these perspectives into consideration when developing policies and programs on a national scale.

Equally important is the capability of the regional office to convey information about NSERC and its programs to a wide range of contacts.

A key aspect of this information flow was the establishment of the NSERC-Pacific Advisory Committee (PAC). This committee was established to provide guidance to the operations of NSERC-Pacific and make key contributions to NSERC-Pacific's operational plan. In addition, the committee volunteers are key members of the science and technology mosaic of the region. Members were selected both for their individual knowledge and to ensure that a cross representation of postsecondary institutes (both large and small), federal and provincial governments, industry associations and other organizations was achieved. The NSERC-Pacific Advisory Committee had its inaugural meeting in November 2006.





NSERC-Pacific Advisory Committee 2006-07

Ken Armour	Director, Universities and Research, British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education
Dennis Bruchet	Manager, Western Economic Diversification Canada
Ian Church	Senior Science Advisor, Government of Yukon
Karimah Es Sabar	Executive Director, Life Sciences British Columbia (formerly BC Biotech)
Pauline Finn	Director Community Outreach, Telus World of Science
Blair Littler	Vice-President, The University Presidents' Council of British Columbia
Brent McCollum	PhD Candidate, Simon Fraser University
Ben Pedret	Industrial Technology Advisor, National Research Council Canada, Industrial Research Assistance Program (IRAP)
Jim Reichert	Vice-President of Research and International, British Columbia Institute of Technology
Tim Walzak	President and CEO, Innovation and Development Corporation, University of Victoria
Max Blouw (ex-officio)	Vice President Research, University of Northern British Columbia
Haig Farris (ex-officio)	President, Fractal Capital Corporation

PAC

Left to right: Ben Pedret, Pauline Finn, Dennis Bruchet, Jim Reichert, Brent McCollum, Ian Church at the inaugural PAC meeting.

NSERC-Pacific Representatives

NSERC Representatives (Reps) at each of the NSERC-eligible university institutions in the region are a valuable resource who increase the awareness at both their respective institutes and throughout the community. With their contacts and a small budget ($5,000 at each institute) Reps are able to increase the awareness of NSERC and of the educational and career opportunities in science and engineering.

NSERC-Pacific Reps 2006-07

Joselito Arocena	Ecosystem and Science Management Program, University of Northern British Columbia
Richard Brewster	Department of Mathematics and Statistics, Thompson Rivers University
Chris Foote	Fisheries and Aquaculture Department, Malaspina University-College
Grant Ingram	Physical Oceanography, University of British Columbia
David Jack	Department of Chemistry, University of British Columbia-Okanagan
Stefan Joseph	Research Services Office, British Columbia Institute of Technology
Eric Manning	Department of Computer Science and Electrical and Computer Engineering, University of Victoria
Mario Pinto	Department of Chemistry, Simon Fraser University
Eve Stringham-Durovic	Department of Biology, Trinity Western University
Vacant	University College of the Fraser Valley
Vacant	Royal Roads University

Left to right: Megan Griffith, NSERC-Pacific; Eve Stringham-Durovic and Craig Montgomery at the NSERC-Pacific Official Launch.

Official Launch

NSERC-Pacific was welcomed into the NSERC fold at the official launch on March 12, 2007, at the Vancouver Museum. NSERC President, Suzanne Fortier, announced the establishment of the office and its mandate to represent NSERC in the Pacific Region to a receptive audience of over 100 people from academia, industry and government. NSERC's Executive Vice President, Nigel Lloyd, connected via videoconference and welcomed NSERC-Pacific on behalf of his Ottawa colleagues. In addition, NSERC-Atlantic and NSERC-Prairies sent recorded video salutations. Ken Armour of the British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education noted the increase in provincial-federal collaboration made possible by the NSERC local presence, and the late Grant Ingram of the University of British Columbia commented on how the office can assist NSERC Reps in the region.

Left to right: Rick Warner, NSERC-Pacific; Suzanne Fortier and Bill Coderre, NSERC at NSERC-Pacific's Official Launch.

PARTICIPATION

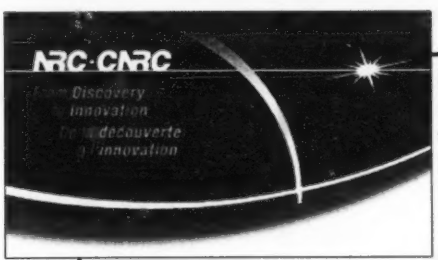
The mandate of NSERC-Pacific includes developing and implementing strategies that further research and innovation through participation in NSERC's funding programs. In addition to NSERC's traditional funding for basic research through its Discovery Grants Program, NSERC also spends approximately $160 million per year on collaborative projects between academics and industry. This suite of programs, the Research Partnerships Programs (RPP), is designed to facilitate the commercialization of products and technologies invented at universities and other publicly funded research institutions.

The 2007 federal science and technology strategy, *Mobilizing Science and Technology to Canada's Advantage*, recognizes the importance of a fully-engaged private sector in the innovation process. Canada consistently ranks highly among the Group of Eight (G8) countries on such measures as the stature of our researchers and the size of our skilled workforce. However, in Canada, the level of R&D investment by the private sector (a critical driver of innovation and continued economic growth) is well below the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) average.

Securing Canada's position in the knowledge-based global economy, for the benefit and well-being of all Canadians, will depend on fostering an environment that encourages the participation of the private sector in the innovation process.

NSERC's RPP, which funds projects requiring the participation of academics and industry, addresses this situation. However, as well known as NSERC is among the academic community, it is much less well-known among industry. Nor is there sufficient recognition of NSERC's partnerships programs among academics. Add to this lack of awareness, the significant cultural differences that exist between the academic and industrial environments, and considerable barriers to partnership formation occur.

NSERC-Pacific is working to overcome these obstacles by hosting or co-hosting university-industry workshops. These workshops focus on providing a forum in which academics and individuals from the private sector can meet informally, learn about various government funding programs, and discuss issues and projects of mutual interest.



NSERC-Pacific and NRC-IRAP Pacific

In October, NSERC-Pacific staff made a presentation to the 40 National Research Council Canada (NRC) Industrial Technology Advisors (ITAs) that deliver the Industrial Research Assistance Program (IRAP) in British Columbia and the Yukon Territory. The presentation focused on the suite of Research Partnership Programs that NSERC offers that would, naturally, be applicable to NRC-IRAP clients. This presentation was the first of a concerted effort to make ITAs aware of NSERC and encourage them to convey the various funding options to their clients. NSERC cannot and should not duplicate the reach that these ITAs have into the region's small and medium-sized enterprises. Since this initial meeting, ITAs have regularly referred companies to NSERC-Pacific.

Nanotech BC

Nanotech BC has three mandates:

Advocate – Provide a voice for the British Columbia nanotechnology community, both at home and internationally.
Stimulate – Foster a thriving nanotechnology community where government, academic and business stakeholders can meet and support each other.
Educate – Communicate with industrial, academic and government sectors as well as with the public to increase awareness of nanotechnology and what it means for British Columbia.

At two of Nanotech BC's networking events, NSERC-Pacific staff gave presentations on the Research Partnerships Programs to over a hundred researchers from both industry and academia.

Academic Institute Events

NSERC-Pacific staff gave presentations on the Discovery Grants Program to approximately 120 faculty and administrative staff at Simon Fraser University, the University of British Columbia and the newly eligible British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT). One of the participants at the BCIT session subsequently became BCIT's first Discovery Grant holder. In addition, NSERC-Pacific staff attended a similar event at Trinity Western University where NSERC Ottawa staff presented to 20 faculty and staff.

In March, NSERC-Pacific staff made a presentation on NSERC's Research Partnerships Programs to 40 participants (academia, industry, government and other interested community organizations) at the University of Northern British Columbia. This was the first of a series of such events that continued on into the 2007-08 fiscal year.

TRIUMF

30 TRIUMF researchers and staff attended an information session on NSERC's funding programs presented by NSERC-Pacific staff.

The presentations and workshops delivered in this inaugural period have enabled NSERC-Pacific to make connections in the local academic and industrial communities. Similar events will be held in the 2007-08 fiscal year in collaboration with: Genome British Columbia; LifeSciences British Columbia; academic institutes including Malaspina University-College, Camosun College, University of British Columbia – Okanagan, Thompson Rivers University, amongst others; Vancouver Coastal Health Research Institute; British Columbia Technology Industry Association; and the BC Cancer Agency